Stream Advocate

Riverways / Adopt-A-Stream Program **Winter 2000**

Stream Team Snapshots

Across the state Stream Teams are working to protect land and habitat, restore water quality, create partnerships and educate their neighbors about rivers.

Blackstone River Watershed: The **Miscoe Brook Stream** Team is spearheading the nomination of Miscoe Brook as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), one of the goals in its Action Plan. The Action Plan is included as part of the nomination package. The Shoreline Survey and resulting publicity served to raise the awareness in Grafton of the importance of actions to protect this 4,000 acre, mostly undeveloped ecological system. Their awareness campaign included sending a Miscoe Brook Guide to all 500+ residents, sampling water quality, and working with landowners to protect land. In addition, the Stream Team assisted with the Hennessy land protection effort.

Charles River Watershed: The **Cutler Park to Commonwealth Ave Protection Group, the Nonasties,** is completing its 501 C-3 application to become a nonprofit organization. To learn more about this Stream Team, go to the Adopt-A-Stream web page and take the link to the Stream Team Web Page.

Roger Frymire, a volunteer from the 1995 lower Charles Shoreline Survey effort, recently completed a Pipe Alert Report based on a monitoring program (Charles River Watershed Association and boat houses) that identified 16 pipes that flow with enough sewage to become health hazards in the immediate vicinity of their outfalls. According to the report, "the outfalls passed the triple test: They Look like sewage, Smell like sewage, Test like sewage." As one of the outcomes of this study, Roger proposes that BioHazard signs be placed next to the outfalls.

Housatonic River Watershed: The **East Branch Stream Team** reports that after they discovered storm water entering the ponds leading into the East Branch, the Housatonic Valley Association and the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission submitted a grant proposal for a study that will lead to the mitigation of this problem. Although we haven't heard whether they received the grant, the proposal shows the importance of partnership and working together to solve these more technical issues.

Ipswich River Watershed: The **Reading/North Reading Stream Team** received an "Environmental Leadership Award" for its impressive and diverse accomplishments from the Ipswich River Watershed Association. One of its recent actions was to propose inclusion of 6 sites (the dirty half dozen) in North Reading on the Toxics Action Center's Dirty Dozen sites. TAC has listed the "dirty half dozen sites" on its top 12 listing. In addition, the Stream Team has filed with DEP to have the "dirty half dozen" become a "Public Involvement Project". There is now opportunity for public input in the clean up of these sites. The **Headwaters Stream Team** in Wilmington is also working on two 21E sites and is planning to have them become public Involvement projects. The **Ipswich Stream**

Continued on next page

RESOURCES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

See the winter Riverways Newsletter for grants, including *Online Resources.*

June is Rivers Month! Highlight your river and draw in more support with an event in June. List your event in the Riverways' River's Month calendar. Join other New England and national groups in celebrating **Rivers 2000**. Contact Kathleen O'Connor with date, place and contact information at 626-1541.

Biodiversity Days on June 9-11 A cooperative effort between EOEA, nonprofits and many education institutions to sign up and challenge school children, amateur naturalists and lay citizens to find 100 or more species in their home or neighboring towns. Call Peter Alden for more information, 727-5227 x301.

The **Water Resources Conservation and Efficiency Act** is now before the House Ways and Means Committee. This bill (S. 1042 and H. 3124) would strengthen state and local water use efficiency/conservation. Contact Kerry Mackin of the Ipswich River Watershed Assoc. [(978) 887-8404] for additional information and advice on how best to make your views heard on this important legislation.

New Web Page! Look in the coming weeks for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' new webpage, including information on the Watershed Initiative. Check it out- www.state.ma.us/ envir.

Data Presentation Manual Available "Ready, Set Present!" is now available to monitoring groups for $5 through Massachusetts Water Watch Partnership. More information at www.umass.edu/tei/mwwp, or call 413-545-5531.

The "**Directory of Funding Sources for Grassroots River and Watershed Conservation Groups in New England and New York 1999-2000**" is now available from River Network's website at www.rivernetwork.org/nedirect.htm or from the Riverways Programs.

Massachusetts Public Access Board is looking for small boat access sites. Cartop/canoe sites would be suitable for canoes, kayaks, and other watercraft not requiring boat ramps, with parking for only one or two cars. State PAB funds will pay for minor improvements on public lands. Call Jack Sheppard at (617)- 727-1843 for more information.

Snapshots continued

Team is constructing a boardwalk behind the YMCA on a marsh to encourage understanding of the ecosystem and connection to the river. They are also working with businesses to encourage citizens not to feed ducks on business property.

Merrimack River Watershed: Congratulations to the Friends of the Powow River, a former Stream Team, that has just become the **Powow River Watershed Association**.

Mt. Hope Bay: **Cole and Lee Rivers – River Aware**. Another partnership brought about a Shoreline Survey on the Cole and Lee Rivers. Partners included the EOEA Watershed Team Leader, Andrea Langhauser, EOEA intern, Ryan McGorty, town officials from Swansea and Somerset, residents of both communities and state legislators. Senator (then Representative) Joan Menard participated in the Shoreline Survey, and Representative Phil Travis participated in the Action planning meeting. In addition, Congressman McGovern's legislative aide came to the Shoreline Survey training workshop. Results of the Shoreline Survey include: sending a letter to MA Highway urging reconstruction of the Route 103 Bridge to solve the tidal constriction caused by the current bridge structure; sharing results with town Board of Health confirming that problem pipes identified by the Division of Marine Fisheries still require immediate remediation; and creating a plan to bring all partners together at a Water Quality Forum for the towns.

Nashua River Watershed: Working with Al Futterman, NRWA, two new urban Stream Teams in the Nashua Watershed have completed their Shoreline Surveys and Action Plans. The **Fitchburg Stream Team** is sharing its Action Plan with committees in Fitchburg that are planning for the future to make sure that the river is seen as a focal point for this "City on the River." The **Clinton Stream Team** is sharing its action plan with the Open Space Planning Committee. To see pictures and a narrative of a section of the Clinton Stream Teams Shoreline Survey, go to www.srwd.com/nashua, or see the link from the Adopt-A-Stream web page.

Neponset River Watershed: Tom Palmer, co-chair of the **Friends of the Neponset Estuary**, has been involved in many an issue since the Shoreline Survey in 1994. The Friends have many successes including working with the MA Highway Department to change its redesign of a bridge to protect anadromous fish, habitat surveys, tours, and citizen awareness. One of the projects that Tom has worked long and hard on is the uphill struggle to protect a wetland and a stopover site for migratory and nesting birds on Marina Bay. For more information about this work, see his web page http://people.ne.mediaone.net/ophis/space.htm.

SuAsCo Rivers Watershed: SWAMP –the Sudbury River Watershed Monitoring and Protection Group - received an Adopt-A-Stream Award at a recent Southborough Selectmen's meeting. Attendees included Mike Fleming, EOEA Watershed Team Leader, and Nancy Bryant, SuAsCo Coalition Director. Stream Team members brought the August drought and dry riverbed to the selectmen's attention and described actions of the Stream Team. The Selectmen responded by congratulating the group and saying "volunteers can sometimes do more than elected boards."

SWAMP also attended a recent SuAsCo Watershed Team Meeting. The Watershed Team was treated to slides of the upper Sudbury taken by Stream Team member, Frank Gohlke, well-known fine arts photographer. Organizing their presentation around topics including: (1) issues on the river; (2) Stream Team accomplishments; and (3) the rivers unmet needs, they brought this section of the river to life for the Watershed Team. Most of the Watershed Team members had not been to this section of the river and expressed appreciation to the Stream Team for sharing insights that will help the Watershed Team with its planning. The Stream Team said that they made good contacts with the agency staff and with the watershed associations at the meeting.

CREST – After the Concord River Environmental Stream Team identified an illegally breached beaver dam in Billerica that resulted in thousands of dead fish and other organisms, members worked tirelessly to bring the problem to appropriate town and state officials so that some remediation could take place and to prevent similar environmental violations. In response, an Environmental Law Enforcement Officer investigated the situation. The Stream Team is working with the town to make sure that this will not happen again.

Westfield River Watershed: A new Stream Team was formed in Huntington to do a Shoreline Survey both as a planning tool and in response to interest in extending the Wild and Scenic Designation of the Westfield River. Shoreline Surveyors found a beautiful river with many amenities and assets that they wish to protect. Next steps include work to protect land, share information with the Open Space Committee, and work on Wild and Scenic River Designation.

Stream Team Tip: Building Membership

- Schedule monthly meetings at a regular time and location. This is an easy way for members to know about the next meeting even if they have missed one.
- Try communicating by email. Some groups find this to be easier than a series of phone calls and less expensive than sending out mailings.
- Find a way to get regular articles in the local paper. This allows for members as well as others to see what the group is doing. And it helps the Stream Team gain recognition, and the town to become familiar with your work.

We are looking for examples of funding through local businesses. If your group has successfully worked with local businesses to fund a project we'd love to hear your story. Please contact us.

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Adopt-A-Stream Web Page: What's Available Online

Seen the Adopt-A-Stream webpage? We are continuing to add program information, resources, links and Stream Team data. Stream Teams, check out your webpage at www.state.ma.us/dfwele/river/rivaas_toc.htm. Here is a list of just some of what is available through this online resource.

Stream Team Section -The map on the front page launches you into our Stream Team section containing:

- Maps of Shoreline Surveys;
- Data from Shoreline Surveys including starting and ending point, summary of the survey;
- Successes for the Stream Team;
- Information on ongoing activities;
- Pictures from the Shoreline Surveys.

Available in Resources Section:

- Links to grants information and Compass
- Shoreline Survey Data Sheets- Recently updated Shoreline Survey forms
- Link to *VolunteerMatch*, a volunteer matching service on the web
- On-line version of our newsletter, *Stream Advocate*
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Stream Team members
- Fact Sheets- Outreach and Working with School Aged Groups. More to come soon!
- Proceedings from the 1999 River Advocates Forum

Available in Web-Links Section:

- Links to Environmental Organizations, national and Massachusetts
- Links to other Adopt-A-Stream groups around the country
- Links to sites that are of interest to Stream Teams: where to get data on the USGS site, EPA site, and rainfall information.

Value of Shoreline Survey

The value of Shoreline Surveys goes considerably beyond Stream Teams to be potentially useful in a wide range of applications. Stream Team data can be used by:

- local communities as they work to protect rivers;
- Watershed Teams as they make their work plans that include local streams;
- DEP as they write their assessments for each of the watersheds in Massachusetts to determine if streams are meeting the standards assigned by the state. They can use Shoreline Survey information in the aesthetic portion of the assessment, in pinpointing problems and sources of problems.

Next Steps

Stream Teams can use the Adopt-A-Stream webpage not only to highlight their stream, but also to learn about similar issues and concerns from other Stream Teams. The webpage currently has summaries and shoreline survey information; we would like to add river descriptions, priorities for action and more Stream Team successes, as well as river projects requiring assistance. Do you have updates or pictures you would like to see added the web? Send submissions to Rachel.

To learn more about sharing Stream Team data, see the Riverways Newsletter.

Winter Roads: The Impacts of Salt and Sand

We are very familiar in Massachusetts with icy roads in winter. To combat this threat, Departments of Public Works use a combination of sand and salt to encourage ice melt and provide better traction on the pavement. After salt is applied, however, it is washed off the pavement and carried into local waterways, increasing salinity. Excess sand accumulates on the roadway, blocks stormdrains and swales, and increases the sedimentation of streams and rivers especially at culverts and stormwater discharge pipes.

Salinity increases are usually localized to areas close to roadways, but vulnerable groundwater systems are easily affected by the increase in salt because it is readily dissolved in water and can percolate through the soil into the groundwater. Increasing salinity levels in groundwater has adversely impacted many municipal water systems and private wells in Massachusetts, in some cases resulting in well closures. Salt along roadways also encourages the spread of *Phragmites* or Common Reed that most are familiar with along highway rights-of-way and stresses salt intolerant trees and shrubs.

There are measures that can be taken to limit the damage salt may cause to the environment. Many of the most severe salt contamination problems come from improper storage of materials before their application on roads. When salt is stored uncovered, precipitation can carry heavy loads of dissolved salt to surrounding waters. The improper disposal of plowed snow can also lead to high levels of salt and sand contamination to streams and rivers. Salt use should be reduced when possible by establishing "low salt areas" in sensitive environments or residential areas, or by using a higher percentage of sand in the sand/salt mix. Both timing of application and wetting of the salt before application so that it sticks to the road more easily, lead to fewer applications.

The Department of Environmental Protection has issued an emergency snow disposal guidance to protect water resources from contamination. However, there should be no disposal in saltmarsh or vegetated wetlands, rivers, shellfish beds, mudflats, drinking water sources or ACEC's. DEP also states that if waterways must be used because of no other alternative, the water should have adequate flow to provide mixing and the activity should conform with all town by-laws. Snow fences and trees can be used to keep snow from blowing onto the road, reducing the need for plowing.

Under these guidelines, salt should be located in a covered building on an impervious surface. Drainage from the area should be designed to divert runoff away from the structure and to collect any contaminated material. These facilities should be constructed so that all handling of material is done in an enclosed area and should not be located in water supply watersheds.

Street cleaning is an effective way of removing excess sand and debris from the road. This is important in keeping sediment from entering rivers and streams through storm drains and drainage swales. Streets should be swept at a minimum in both spring and fall, and catch basins should be cleared of sand and debris. Check with your Department of Public Works and find out if they sweep regularly.

Look for the Winter Riverways Programs Newsletter,

including information on:

- Planning for a drought
- Rivers 2000
- Spring Biodiversity Days
- Opening miles of rivers- River Restore update
- Working with the Watershed Initiative and EOEA
- Urban Rivers Update
- What you need to know about TMDL's
- Resources and grants

Do you have a particular issue you would like to see addressed in the *Stream Advocate*? Write and let us know. Your questions can help others.

The **Adopt-A-Stream Program** works to support and encourage local stream teams and communities in efforts to protect and restore the ecological integrity of the Commonwealth's watersheds: rivers, streams and adjacent lands.

For more information or to receive our newsletter, please contact:

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Also check out our web-site:
Http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/rivAAS_toc.htm

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